



May 2015

Hello everyone.

Last month we enjoyed a great trip to Poinsett State Park. Fourteen members, and a few guests, were present for the daytime hike, and a few of us stayed overnight. Members that attended include Caroline Eastman, Bill Hamel, Kitty Beverly, Marsha and Bob Hamlin, Dave Schuetrum, Pat and Jerry Bright, Mary Douglass, Tom Jones, Kim McManus, Paul Kalbach, Glenn Quattlebaum, and Gordon Murphy.



It was a very productive weekend for viewing plants, birds, and herps. The day started out with a light rain, but this passed after about an hour and the rest of the day was overcast and quite pleasant.



We started the day exploring the edge of the pond where we saw a couple of banded water snakes in a drainage pipe as well as really huge river frog tadpoles. The river frog was one of our target species for this trip and we were successful in seeing them, thanks to Paul's excellent netting skills. We then proceeded to the Coquina Trail that circles the pond. We saw and heard many



birds as we hiked the trail. One highlight was catching a glimpse of a scarlet tanager when we stepped out into the edge of a clear-cut area adjacent to the trail. One of my favorite parts of the trail leads through an area of flooded timber at the upper end of the pond. Walking the low boardwalks is about as close as you can come to wading through a swamp without getting your feet wet. Once we completed the Coquina Trail, the group split up and investigated different areas of the park. One of the stops was the overlook which provided an impressive view of the Wateree River floodplain.



After a barbeque dinner in Pinewood, several of us headed back to the park for some night time exploring. We reconvened at the pond as the sun was setting, donned our headlamps, and walked the Coquina Trail in search of herps. Several frogs, and one cottonmouth, were found on the trail, and when we made it back to the Ranger office, Paul's netting skill paid off again when he snagged more frogs. After our night walk, Mary, Tom, Pat, Jerry and I headed to a cabin for the night. Kim and



Paul took a chance on the weather and opted to stay in the campground.



Sunday morning found us back at the pond searching the edge, and later we took a walk back to the trail/boardwalk to see what we could find. We were fortunate to see a nice cottonmouth sunning on a log close to the trail.

I'd like to thank Caroline for scouting and hosting this great trip. This month we will be headed back to Francis Marion Forest. Once again our trip is combined with the annual Hell Hole trip. Last year we did a combined trip with the Hell Hole regulars and it was a rewarding trip cruising the Forest Service roads in search of herps. Last year several SCAN members also explored a Carolina bay, a nice depression wetland, a pitcher plant bog, and were fortunate to see nesting red-cockaded woodpeckers and American chaffseed.



I hope to see you all at Hell Hole!

- Gordon

Francis Marion National Forest / Hell Hole Swamp

Berkeley County, SC

May 23, 2015 10:30am (Day Trip)

May 22 - 25, 2015 (Camping)

Regional Directors:

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On Saturday May 23, SCAN will visit the Francis Marion National Forest. We'll gather at the Hell Hole Road campground at 10:30am. From there, we'll break out into smaller groups for exploration of the vast area. Options include road cruising for snakes and herps, visiting pitcher plant bogs, scouting Carolina Bays, and seeking out unusual wildflowers. This will be SCAN's second year taking part in the annual 'Under a Low Country Moon' interpretive weekend.

Under a Low Country Moon (ULCM) is comprised of a group of South Carolina naturalists who have met on Memorial Day weekend annually since 2001. The purpose is to document species in the Francis Marion National Forest Hell Hole wilderness area. While our focus is on herpetology, we are not limited to reptiles and amphibians. We include birders and entomology experts as well as nature photographers. We note changes in the plant communities that are vulnerable to meteorological events such as hurricanes and drought. Our observations indicate that fire enhances these communities. The 2,125 acres of the Hell Hole Bay Wilderness and surrounding areas include Carolina bays, upland longleaf pine savannas, hardwood forests, cypress swamps and associated waterways. There are unique plant communities, including carnivorous pitcher plants. Reptile and amphibian populations are extremely diverse, as are mammals. The area is teeming with white-tailed deer and supports associated predators. Our participants have sighted bobcats and coyotes as well as black bear.

This trip can be expanded into an overnight or weekend excursion. ULCM members will start setting up camp on Thursday. The last stragglers don't leave until lunchtime on Monday. Both hotel and rustic camping options are available. The closest hotels are approximately 30 minutes drive away in Moncks Corner. Feel free to join in the fun for as long as you like!

Dinner

Due to the remote location of this trip, dinner will be potluck at the campground. A few camp stoves will be available for heating items. Barbecue will be provided. Please check out our Facebook page or email Kim McManus at kim.f.mcmanus@gmail.com to indicate what type of items you'd like to contribute.

There are no facilities at the campground, so please plan accordingly.

Directions

Directions and mapping can be found at http://www.scnaturalists.org/?tribe_events=francis-marion-foresthellhole-over-nighter

Written directions are as follows:

Interstate directions from Columbia, SC to Hell Hole Road Huger, SC 29450

Get on I-26 E in Cayce from US-176 E/US-21 S/US-321 S

Head east on Gervais St toward Main St

Make a U-turn at Main St

Turn left at the 1st cross street onto Assembly St

Turn right onto Blossom St

Continue onto US-176 E/US-21 S/US-321 S

Merge onto I-26 E via the ramp to Charleston Follow I-26 E to Berkeley County. Take exit 194 from I-26 E

Merge onto I-26 E

Take exit 194 toward Rd 16/Jedburg/Pinopolis Continue on Jedburg Rd. Take Black Tom Rd, US-17 ALT N, Bethera Rd and State Rd S-8-48 to Hell Hole Rd C

Backroads directions from Columbia to the Hell Hole Road Campground:

1. Starting at the SC Statehouse in downtown Columbia --
2. Go east on Gervais St (1.3 mi)
3. Turn right onto Millwood Ave (1.4 mi)
4. Continue to follow US-76 E (30.6 mi)
5. Turn right onto Patriot Pkwy (4.7 mi)
6. Slight right toward SC-204 / Loring Mill Rd (0.2 mi)
7. Continue straight onto SC-204 / Loring Mill Rd (2.4 mi)
8. Turn left onto SC-763 N / Wedgefield Rd (0.3 mi)
9. Turn right onto Pinewood Rd (0.8 mi)
10. Turn left onto Mc Crays Mill Rd (1.5 mi)
11. Turn right onto S Guignard Dr (1.6 mi)
12. Continue onto S Guignard Pkwy (1.0 mi)
13. Turn right onto US-521 S / Manning Rd (15.1 mi)
14. Slight left onto N Church St (0.7 mi)
15. Turn left onto US-521 S/E Boyce St (15.1 mi)
16. Continue onto SC-375 S / Gourdin Rd (5.1 mi)
17. Turn right onto US-52 S (10.1 mi)
18. Turn left onto SC-45 E / Church Rd (17.3 mi)
19. Turn right onto SC-41 S (9.2 mi)
20. Turn left onto Hell Hole Rd (destination will be on the right in 0.6 mi)

Travel time: From downtown Columbia the trip is 119 miles and should take about 2 hours and 30 minutes

Directions from Charleston, SC to Hell Hole Road Huger, SC 29450

Follow US-17 N and SC-41 N to Hell Hole Rd in Berkeley County

Head north on Meeting St toward Court House Square

Turn right onto Wentworth St

Turn left onto E Bay St

Merge onto US-17 N/Arthur Ravenel Jr Bridge/Septima Clark Pkwy via the ramp to Mt Pleasant

Continue to follow US-17 N

Turn left onto SC-41 N Follow Hell Hole Rd to Hell Hole Rd C

Turn right onto Hell Hole Rd

Turn right onto Hell Hole Rd C Hell Hole Road C

